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ABSTRACT

A review of assessment and planning aids is presented to provide the local school district with a practical and a theoretical framework on which to base its planning for a feasibility study of a year-round school program. The first and most crucial decision that must be made is the determination that educational programing is the basis on which any school program will operate. Unfortunately too many school districts have attempted to determine what calendar design would be most appropriate for their community as a first priority. No such plan can be undertaken adequately without first determining the impact of the plan on the educational program of the district and the extent to which such a plan facilitates or inhibits the achievement of the community educational goals. It is important to incorporate educational baseline data--including information about the curriculum as a part of the feasibility study. Related academic information including student test scores, dropout rates, percentage of students in various programs, and other pertinent data should also be a part of the study. (Author/DN)

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FEASIBILITY STUDY - EDUCATIONAL BASELINE

A SIMULATION NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED AT

6TH NATIONAL SEMINAR ON YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

APRIL 30 - MAY 3, 1974

by

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FEASIBILITY STUDY-EDUCATIONAL BASELINE

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INTRODUCTION

The development of educational baseline data as an integral part of a feasibility study for whatever purpose is obviously a most important task. Three assumptions are presented here for the sake of clairification.

Assumption 1

In order to deal with the concept of "educational baseline", it is necessary first to define the components which will be addressed in this portion of the simulation notebook. Since the term is general rather than specific, the presentation will exclude or de-emphasize certain components which might ordinarilly be incorporated in the development of a total and comprehensive developmental model. Exclusions are based upon the assumption that certain major components will be addressed in other presentations included as a part of this notebook.

Assumption 2

It is assumed that the primary utility of the instruments developed for the simulation notebook will be the assessment of current programs in the light of predetermined goals for a school unit.

Needless to say, investigation of alternative forms of calendar design, instructional reform, staffing patterns or facility utilization are inappropriate if indeed, those charged with planning the operation of schools have not determined, in advance, the outcomes they wish to achieve in a school system.

Assumption 3

No one set of guidelines or instruments can be uniformly helpful. Schools and their communities differ substantially in terms of their wealth, constituency, size, economic and demographic characteristics as well as a host of other variables. Ideal models for planning often presume certain pre-existing conditions which make them unusable to many segments of a total population. An awareness of this condition is present and certain adjustments have been made in the materials presented to reflect that awareness and in an attempt to provide tools which might be helpful.

FEASIBILITY STUDIES

The design and utilization of feasibility studies is not new to education. It should be noted, however, that the majority of these studies were not prompted by a desire to test a new or modified structure against pre-established educational goals. More often, extenuating circumstances in the community literally forced examination of the concept of year-round education as a possible solution to various problems.

Dr. Linda Leffel (1973), in a comprehensive research study conducted in 1973, surveyed all currently operating programs and found that over 1/3 of the operational programs identified "....to increase space or use school facilities twelve months", as the major impetus behind the development of operating programs.

Conversely, Monroe and Farmer (1973), in their research for the Virginia State Department of Education found "experts" throughout the nation predicting:

"....increased student achievement"
"....improved student attitude"
"....curriculum revision/improvement"
"....individualization of curriculum"

as the four highest ranking predicted long range benefits of year-round education.

The point of this discussion is that the design of a feasibility study might well differ based upon whether or not the exercise is undertaken as a theoretical/hypothetical investigation or as an action-oriented response to a set of extant problems.

Educational theorists have, for too long, ignored the difference between the "theoretical/ideal" and the "pragmatic/real". The design and instrumentation provided herein, hopefully merges the two extremes into a foremat which can be utilized or simplified relatively easily depending upon local school situations.

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PLANNING FOR CHANGE

The following review of assessment and planning is presented to provide the local school district with both a practical and theoretical framework upon which to base its planning (feasibility study).

The first instrument is taken from the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) Task Force Report and Recommendations(1969), for development of an Educational Resource Management System (ERMS). The instrument can be modified by adding descriptive information to each force field continuum by placing numbers along the continuum and by adding or discarding variables. In this way the instrument can be used both as an assessment tool and a goal setting device. Additionally, groups of parents, teachers, administrators or other populations can compare status evaluations and goal perceptions. Varying modifications such as Q-sort can be used to place priorities on the various goal statements. (See Figure 1)

Systematic planning includes not only goal setting and assessment but a variety of other tasks leading to a decision to modify the system or retain it as is. Dr. Leffel (1973), in her study which compared characteristics of school districts operating year-round programs with the planning styles they employed, described a planning model and its components as follows:

> The basic components of the model are depicted in Figure 2 (Brieve et.al., 1973). A description of each of the components is provided. These descriptions were used to develop the planning procedures for year-round education in each component. In addition, procedural statements were drawn from a further delineation of specific aspects of the general planning model, year-round education

FIGURE 1

WHERE IS YOUR SCHOOL?

WHICH WAY ARE YOU GOING?

STATEMENT	CONTINUUM	STATEMENT
MARKING SYSTEM OF A-B-C-D-F	----------	EVALUATION OF GROWTH FOR EACH STUDENT
GRADED CLASSROOMS K THRU 12	----------	NON-GRADED CONTINUOUS PROGRESS
PRESCRIBED CURRICULUM	----------	LEARNERS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING
ROTE LEARNING FACTS AND SKILLS	----------	PROBLEM SOLVING CONCEPT CURRICULUM
EGG CRATE CLASSROOMS AND TEXTBOOK LEARNING	----------	FLEXIBLE SPACE AND MATERIALS
STANDARD CLASS SIZE AND PERIODS	----------	FLEXIBLE LEARNING CONDITIONS
ONE TEACHER FOR EACH CLASS	----------	TEAMS OF TEACHERS FOR LEARNING
CERTIFICATED TEACHERS ONLY	----------	DIFFERENTIATED HUMAN AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES
180 SCHOOL DAYS UNIFORM HOURS	----------	YEAR ROUND, OPEN TO COMMUNITY

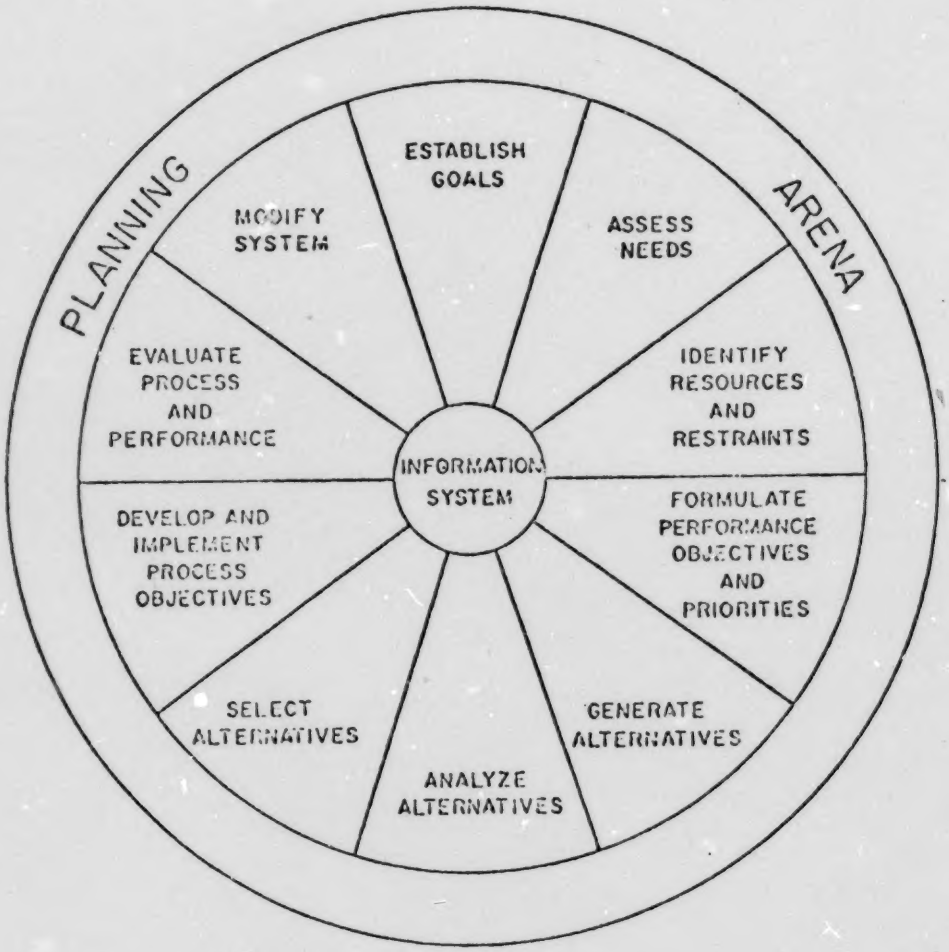


Figure 2

A Planning Process

feasibility and evaluation studies, and educational planning literature.

Planning Arena. Planning occurs within a framework which acknowledges that the goals and cultural values of society will and should influence the educational goals and accomplishments of the system. All school systems operate within an external environment which brings pressure to bear (Stufflebeam et.al., 1972). The planning process should produce creative ideas, but it must also function within established boundaries (Savard, 1967).

Information System. Central to the model is an information system which continually feeds information into and draws data from each of the components in the planning process. This system for storage and retrieval of information is designed by determining (1) what kind of information is needed for planning decisions, (2) what type of decision will be made with the information, and (3) who will use the information to make a decision.

Establish Goals. This component of the planning process provides for the determination of educational goals. Educational goals are general statements of purpose which give direction to all programs and processes of the system. A goal is defined as an explicit statement of what is desired, and it must be capable of being measured and attained. Goals are classified as student performance goals or process goals. Those which relate to what students will accomplish by participation in the program of the system are termed student performance goals. Process goals indicate what teachers, principals, and others will do to facilitate the accomplishment of student performance goals. The goals determined within this component are priority ranked. It is important that the goals be established with input from both within and without the school system so that they may serve as a focal point for the system and community. Major adjustments that involve or relate to the total school system and community must involve all who are interacting to produce the change (Kreitlow and MacNeil, 1970).

Assess Needs. This component of the planning process determines what, if any, discrepancy exists between the state of the system as it is and as it is desired in terms of the goals of the system. A need is defined as the discrepancy which exists between where a system is and where it desires to go. This need is based on several categories of information gathered from a variety of sources both internal and external to the system.

Identify Resources and Restraints. This component of the planning process provides for the identification of

positive factors which will support (resources) and those negative factors which will hinder (restraints) a system in achieving its stated goals. Positive and negative factors internal and external to the system must be identified. In addition, the potency of the factors and the possible resolution of restraints should be considered.

Formulate Performance Objectives and Priorities. This component of the planning process requires the translation of the general educational goals into manageable and specific statements of desired student outcomes. These objectives must relate to the goal, be measurable or observalbe, and specify the conditions and criteria for the desired achievement. All objectives are not equally important in achieving system goals and must be priority ranked (Tempkin, 1970).

Generate Alternatives. The planning process requires the creative identification of as many ways as possible for achieving each of the objectives. An important characteristic of a systematic planning process is looking at several alternative ways to achieve objectives.

Analyze Alternatives. In this component of the planning process, each alternative is analyzed in terms of its ability to achieve the objective within the framework of the resources and restraints internal and external to the system. Two basic types of criteria are established for the evaluation process. The first type includes all criteria which deal with the alternative's ability to contribute to improved student performance and maximum objective achievement. The second type criteria evaluates the alternative in terms of cost; time to plan, develop, and implement; and the socio-psychological factors of interest, acceptance, risk, and political feasibility.

Select Alternative. This component of the planning process requires a decision on one alternative within the framework of the criteria established in the preceding component. Human judgment plays a key role in this component.

Develop and Implement Process Objectives. This component of the planning process provides for identification of the process objectives necessary for the alternative selected to become operational. Each process objective serves to break down the total job to be done into manageable parts (Knezevich, 1969). Specifically, each process objective identifies (1) the major activity involved, (2) an outcome which should result from the process, (3) who is to assume responsibility for implementation, and (4) when the outcome can be observed. The process objectives serve to establish guidelines along which implementation should proceed. Process objectives provide the necessary control for goal attainment (Cook, 1967).

Evaluate Process and Performance. This component of the planning process provides an evaluation design to enable decision makers to have accurate information regarding the extent to which the alternative is in reality maximizing goal attainment. The evaluation design should include an analysis of the student performance objectives, process objectives, and planning process.

Modify System. This component of the planning process provides for changes in the system based on information provided by the evaluation component and the modification of planning procedures as needed. The entire process is an interacting one, and modification should take place at any time when information becomes available that a change in the system or planning process should occur (Neal, 1971).

The components in the model are to be followed in the order presented for the most logical and systematic planning to occur. However, planners may begin the planning process in any component.

While the theoretical model is helpful in that it provides a basic and sound conceptual design for planning, the operationalizing of the model is infinitely more difficult and important. The way in which any school district transfers from theoretical model to a functional study capability culminating in the decision to operate a year-round program is, of course, a critical task.

One such model is provided for review. The model is generalized and could be used as a feasibility study mechanism in most school districts with minor modification.(Figures 3,4,5,6)

Three additional simplified models are presented. The first, (Figures 7, 8) deals with an actual planning mechanism leading to a decision on year-round programming with a simultaneous optional plan to accommodate student populations using alternate plans. The second, which is actually a subsystem of the first, illustrates the activities underway which resulted in the production of a feasibility study under pressure of time (less than three months).(Fig. 9)

SYSTEM I

PLANNING INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEMS

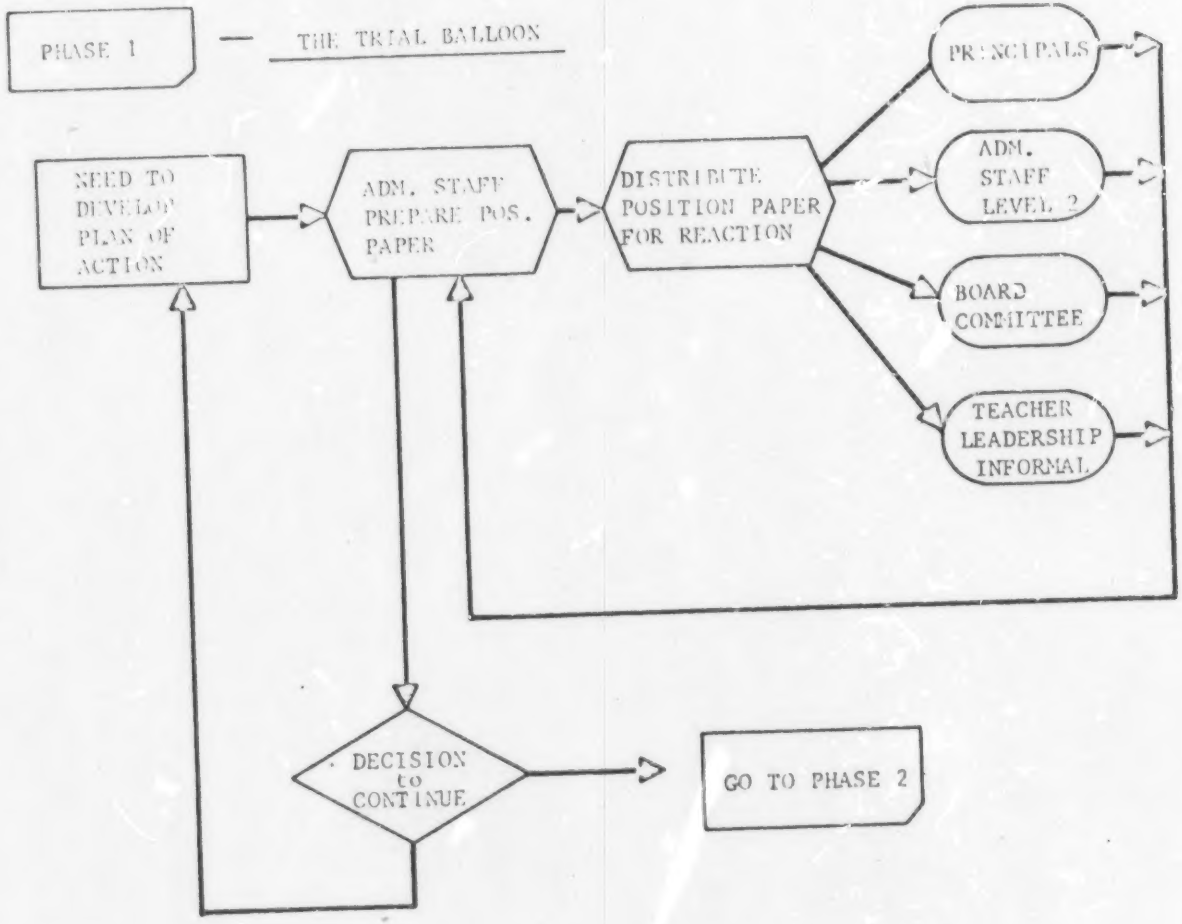


FIGURE 3

SYSTEM I PHASE 2 PLANNING STAGE

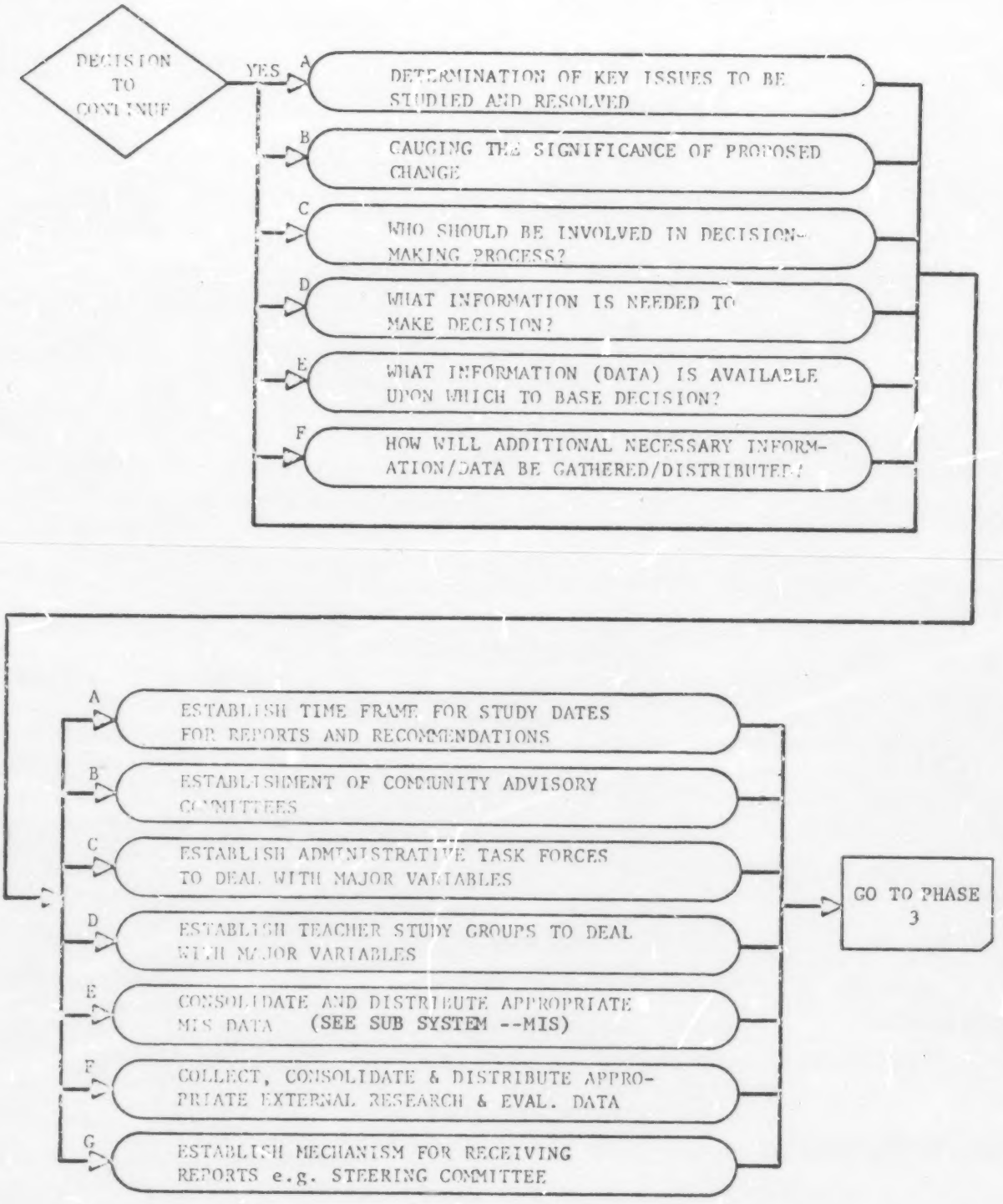
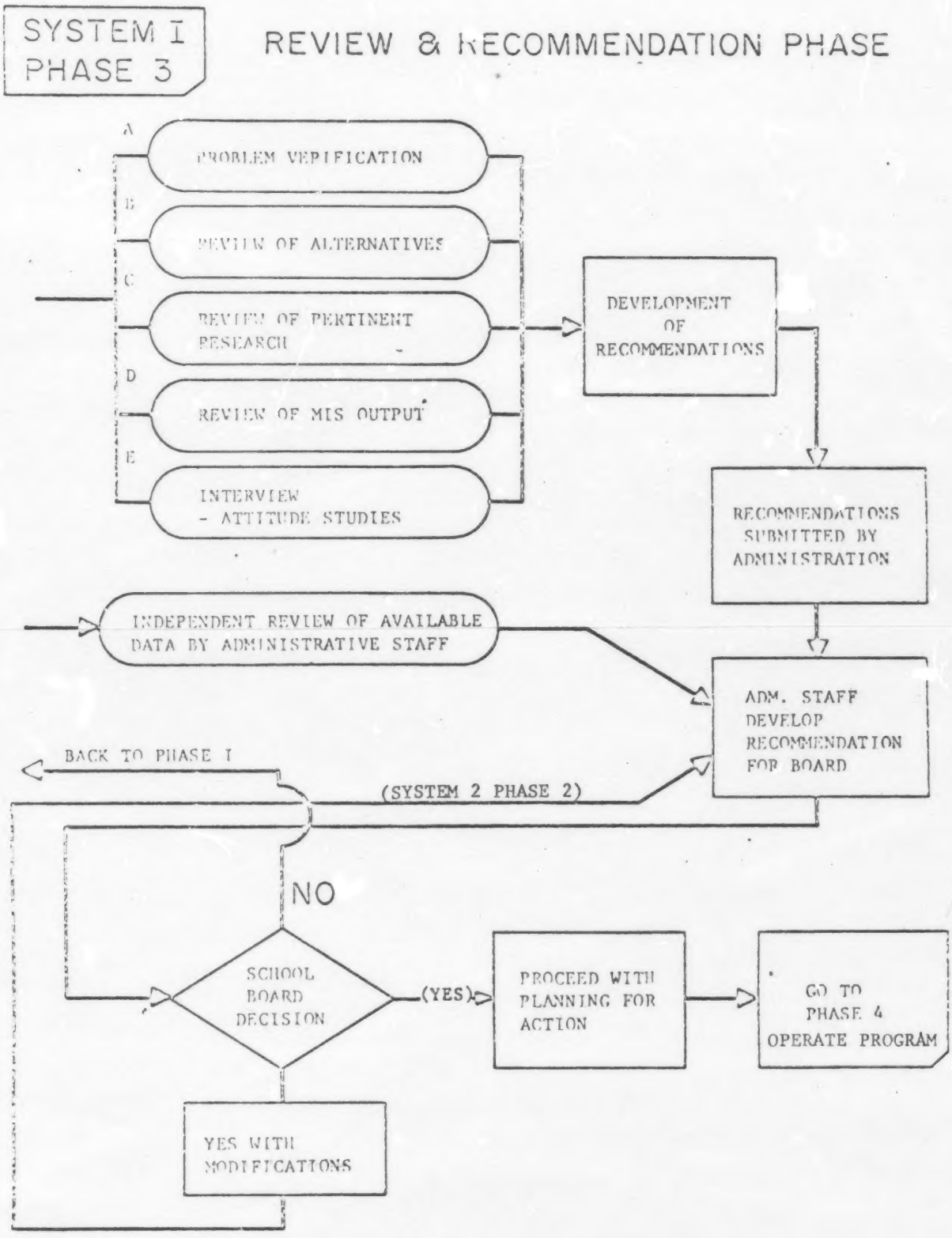
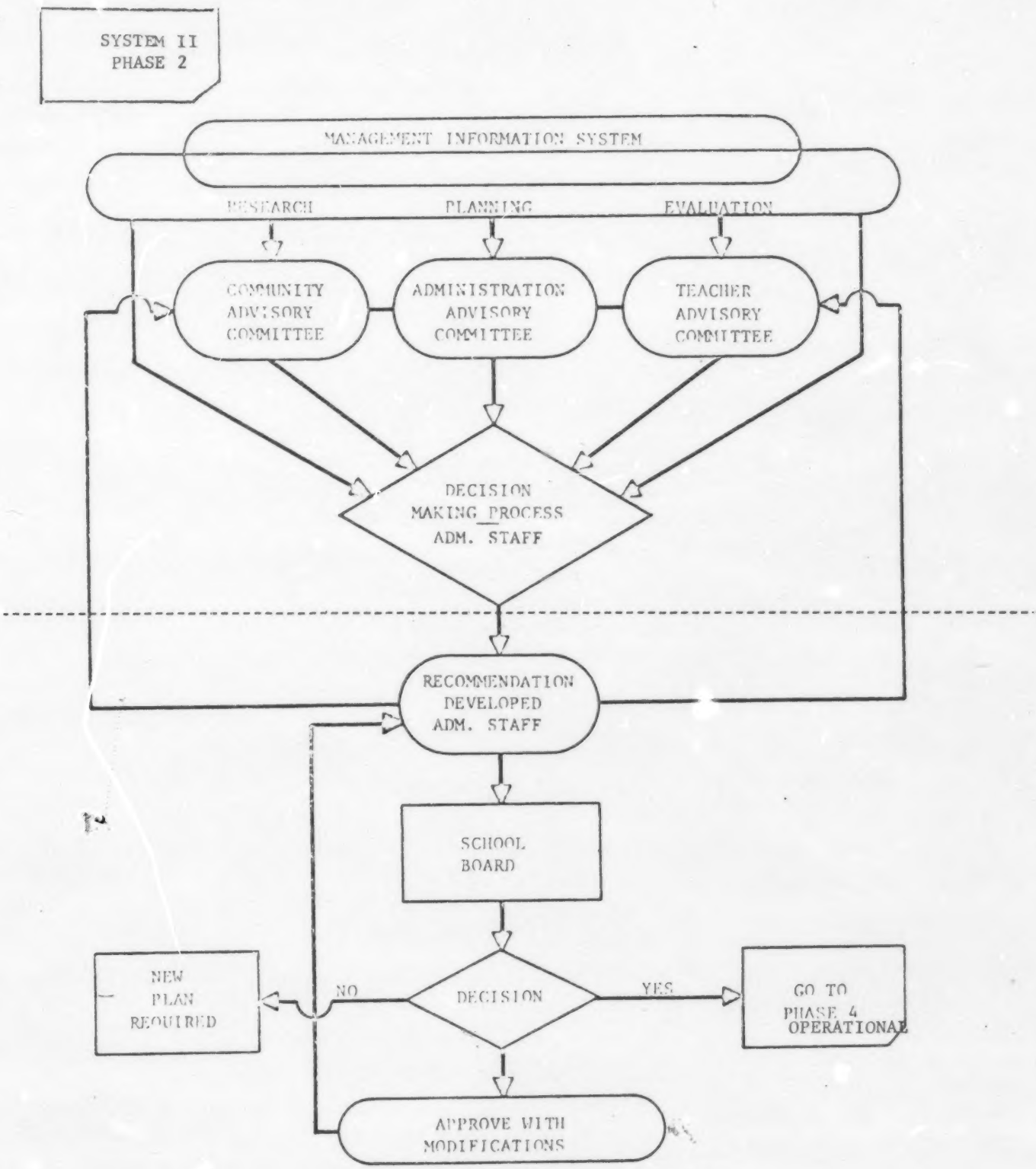

DECISION TO CONTINUE
YES
A
DETERMINATION OF KEY ISSUES TO BE STUDIED AND RESOLVED
B
CAUGING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PROPOSED CHANGE
C
WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?
D
WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED TO MAKE DECISION?
E
WHAT INFORMATION (DATA) IS AVAILABLE UPON WHICH TO BASE DECISION?
F
HOW WILL ADDITIONAL NECESSARY INFORM-ATION/DATA BE GATHERED/DISTRIBUTED?
A
ESTABLISH TIME FRAME FOR STUDY DATES FOR REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
B
ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES
C
ESTABLISH ADMINISTRATIVE TASK FORCES TO DEAL WITH MAJOR VARIABLES
D
ESTABLISH TEACHER STUDY GROUPS TO DEAL WITH MAJOR VARIABLES
E
CONSOLIDATE AND DISTRIBUTE APPROPRIATE MIS DATA (SEE SUB SYSTEM --MIS)
F
COLLECT, CONSOLIDATE & DISTRIBUTE APPRO-PRIATE EXTERNAL RESEARCH & EVAL. DATA
G
ESTABLISH MECHANISM FOR RECEIVING REPORTS e.g. STEERING COMMITTEE
GO TO PHASE 3

FIGURE 5


SYSTEM I
PHASE 3
REVIEW & RECOMMENDATION PHASE
A
PROBLEM VERIFICATION
B
REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVES
C
REVIEW OF PERTINENT RESEARCH
D
REVIEW OF MIS OUTPUT
E
INTERVIEW - ATTITUDE STUDIES
DEVELOPMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED BY ADMINISTRATION
INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DATA BY ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
ADM. STAFF DEVELOP RECOMMENDATION FOR BOARD
BACK TO PHASE I
(SYSTEM 2 PHASE 2)
NO
SCHOOL BOARD DECISION
(YES)
PROCEED WITH PLANNING FOR ACTION
GO TO PHASE 4 OPERATE PROGRAM
YES WITH MODIFICATIONS



NOTE ACTIONS BELOW DOTTED LINE ARE CONGRUENT WITH THOSE SHOWN ON THE BOTTOM HALF OF SYSTEM LABELED SYSTEM I PHASE 3..

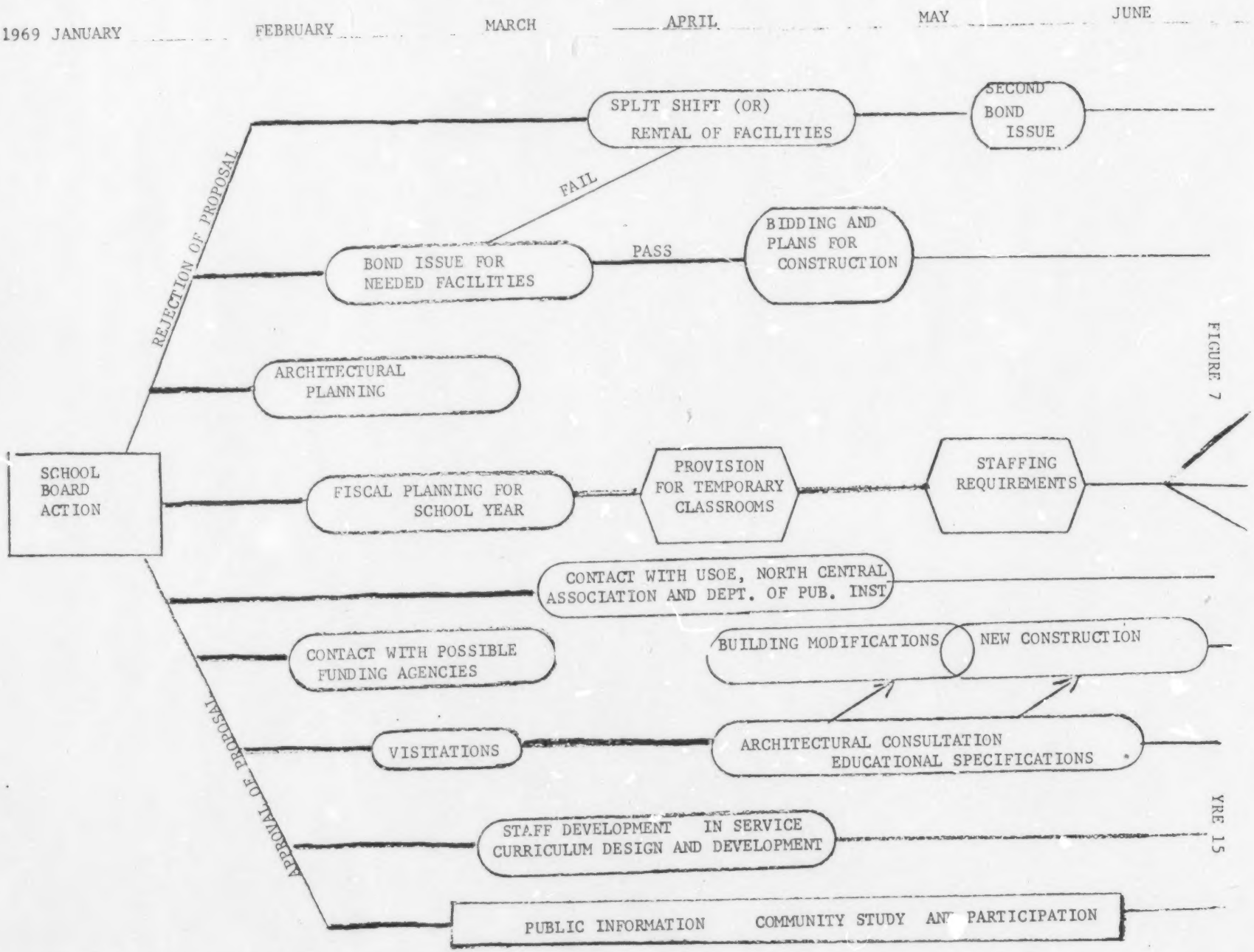


FIGURE 7

YRE 15

1969 JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY

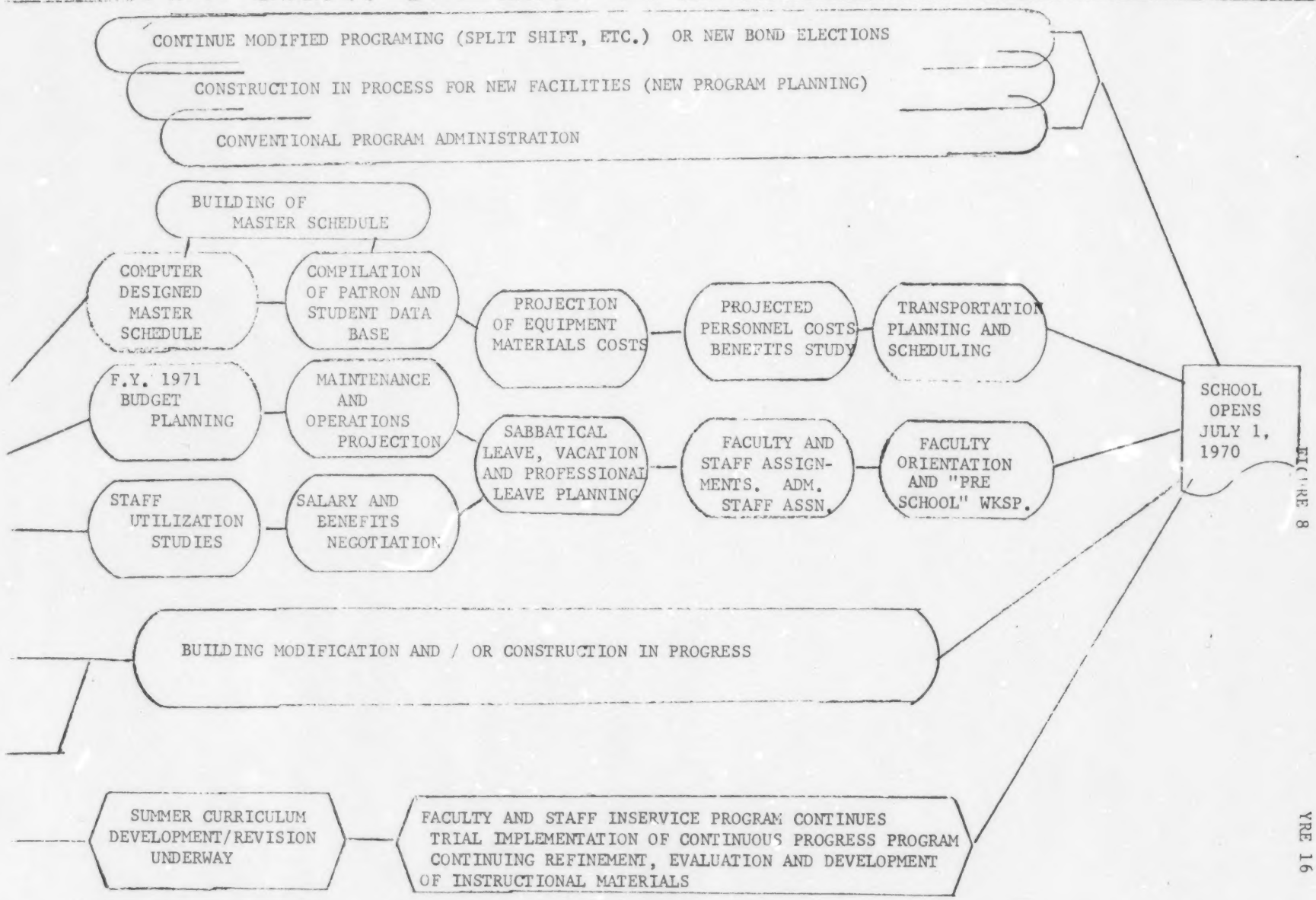

CONTINUE MODIFIED PROGRAMING (SPLIT SHIFT, ETC.) OR NEW BOND ELECTIONS
CONSTRUCTION IN PROCESS FOR NEW FACILITIES (NEW PROGRAM PLANNING)
CONVENTIONAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING OF MASTER SCHEDULE
COMPUTER DESIGNED MASTER SCHEDULE
COMPILATION OF PATRON AND STUDENT DATA BASE
PROJECTION OF EQUIPMENT MATERIALS COSTS
PROJECTED PERSONNEL COSTS BENEFITS STUDY
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND SCHEDULING
F.Y. 1971 BUDGET PLANNING
MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS PROJECTION
SABBATICAL LEAVE, VACATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEAVE PLANNING
FACULTY AND STAFF ASSIGN-MENTS. ADM. STAFF ASSN.
FACULTY ORIENTATION AND "PRE SCHOOL" WKSP.
STAFF UTILIZATION STUDIES
SALARY AND BENEFITS NEGOTIATION
SCHOOL OPENS JULY 1, 1970
BUILDING MODIFICATION AND / OR CONSTRUCTION IN PROGRESS
SUMMER CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT/REVISION UNDERWAY
FACULTY AND STAFF INSERVICE PROGRAM CONTINUES
TRIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTINUOUS PROGRESS PROGRAM
CONTINUING REFINEMENT, EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
CONTINUED PUBLIC INFORMATION PARENT ORIENTATION

FIGURE 8

YRE 16

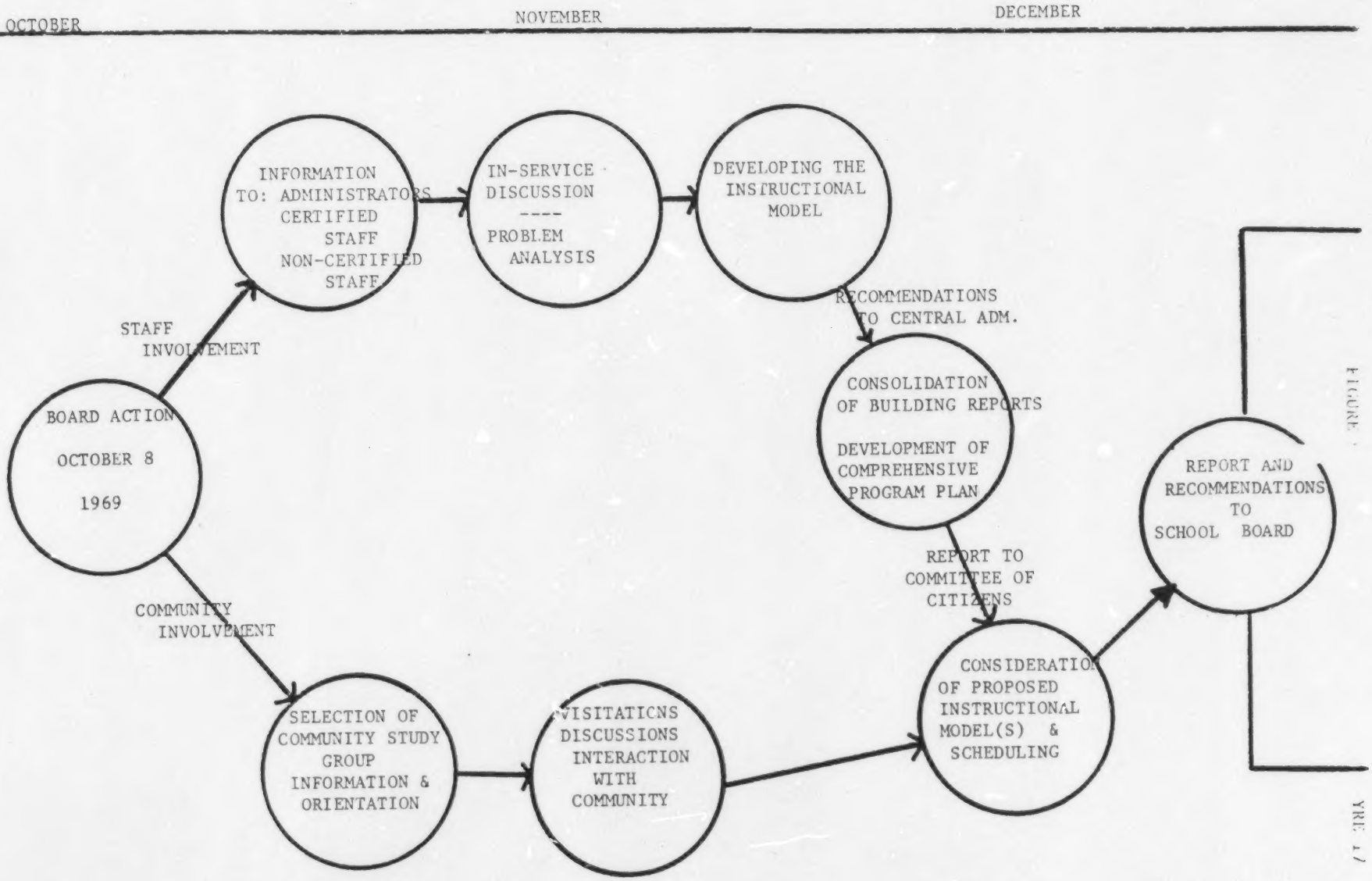


FIGURE 1

YRE 1 /

The third system presents a display of the instructional and program activities outlining various program dimensions which require assessment and evaluation resulting in curricular decision for the coming year.

The entire sequence of activities occurred in a midwestern community during the 18 month period between January, 1969 and August, 1970. The final outcome of the planning resulted in a decision not to implement year-round scheduling. The process did, however, result in a decision to completely revise the school district's curriculum. Subsequent reorganization of staffing patterns and space utilization combined with a $200,000 curriculum development project culminated in the design of a sophisticated K-12 continous progress program which merged differentiated staffing, flexible scheduling, open space and technology in a totally new "learning systems" concept.

It is difficult, if not foolhardy, to propose a set of guidelines for establishing an educational baseline for any community. Recognizing the obvious difficulties in such a task and keeping in mind the assumptions and constraints outlined earlier, the following suggestions are provided without further apology.

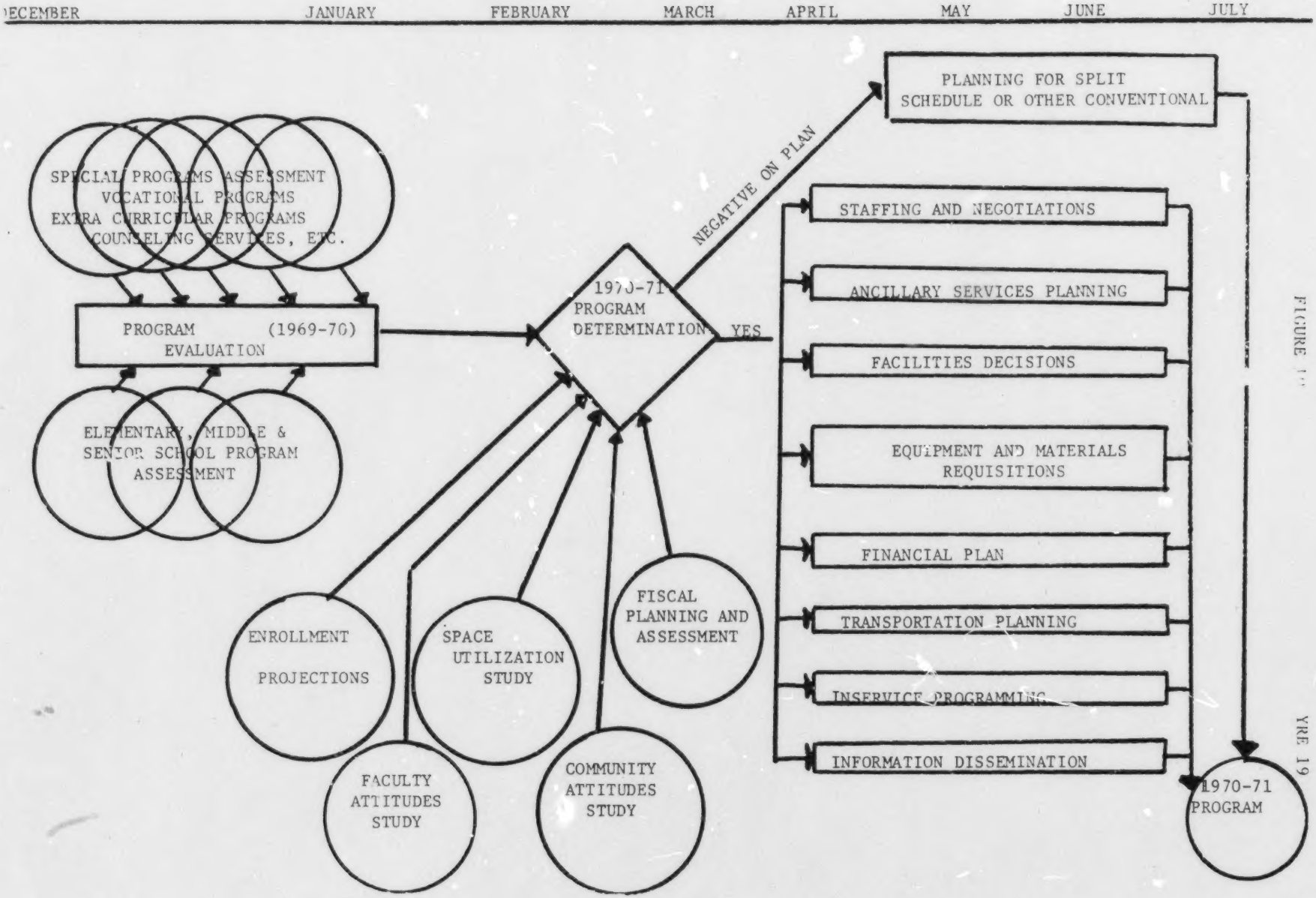


FIGURE 1

YRE 19

FEASIBILITY STUDY - EDUCATIONAL BASELINE

I. Assessment of Goals and Performance

1. Goal Statements and Expectations

If not available use Figure 1 or comparable device.

School board policy and educational philosophy of the district should provide the basis for proposed programming current and projected. If goal statements do not accurately reflect community expectations they should be changed.

If community expectations are not congruent with professional educator's goals the community must be educated and expectations changed. If administrators position is substantially different than community and accommodations are not possible, the administrator should seek other employment.

2. Assessment of Current Educational Practice

(A) How well are current educational practices meeting goals?

(B) What goals are not being met?

(1) achievement of students

(2) utilization of facilities

(3) utilization of personnel

II. Decision Making Based on Asking the Right Questions.

1. Generally what factors inhibit the district from reaching its goals?

(A) space (availability, rigidity)

(B) inflexibility of staff

(C) parental attitudes

(D) fiscal problems

(E) administrative personnel attitudes and capabilities

(F) school board attitudes

(G) personnel training, experience and attitudes

(H) student and parent attitudes

2. Specifically what factors are important in a decision relating to year round schools?

(A) Why should such a change be considered?

(B) Are these factors recognized by the various populations of the district? e.g. staff, parents, taxpayers, school board, administrators?

(C) What are the financial implications of such a change?

-What are the staffing costs?

-Does the curriculum need to be modified?

-What are the transportation costs?

-What are materials and equipment costs?

-What modifications must take place in buildings? (air conditioning)

(D) What impact will such a change have upon the community?

-Use of churches

-Use of recreational facilities

-Use of school facilities

-Economic impact upon local industry

-Neighborhood groupings

(F) What impact will such a change have upon ongoing:

-Educational programs

-Summer school program

-Red Cross swimming program

-Boy Scout and other seasonal camps

-Vocational work experience programs

(F) What impact will such a change have upon staffing?

-How many teachers want full employment?

-How many principals want students in the building all year?

-How many secretary, food service, custodial and transportation workers will be effected and in what ways?

(G) What are the local, state, regional implications of the change?

-Athletic conferences and regulations

-State department forms

-State aid formula

-Statutes governing compulsory attendance

(H) What will the impact be upon students?

-Summer employment

-Club and other group participation

-Attitudes about school

(I) What impact will such a change have upon the family?

-Vacation habits

-Working parents

-Students in different schools

(J) What about the energy crisis?

SUMMARY

The first and most crucial decision which must be made is the determination that educational programming is the basis upon which any school program will operate. Unfortunately too many school districts have attempted to determine what calendar design would be most appropriate for their community as a first priority,

Granted there are many legitimate reasons for considering a year-round school program. It is possible and reasonable to move toward a year-round program without requiring or even considering the curriculum or changes in curriculum as a major dependent variable.

It should be abundantly clear however, that no such plan can be undertaken without first determining the impact of the plan on the educational program of the district and the extent to which such a plan facilitates or inhibits the achievement of the educational goals in any community.

As such, it is important to incorporate educational baseline data including information about the curriculum (present and hoped-for) as a part of the feasibility study. Related academic information including student test scores, drop-out rates, percentage of students in various programs and other pertinent data should be a part of the study. It is hoped the planning aides presented in this paper will assist the district which wishes to undertake serious study of year-round education. There is no question that the devices, if utilized, will produce a substantial and relevant "educational baseline" for your study, planning and consideration.